

**Testimony of Mr. Bernard Thomas – Hartford CT
Supporting Bill 1195, An Act Concerning School Finance Reform
Before the Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly
Public Hearing, March 24, 2011**

Good Afternoon Co-Chairs Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding Senate Bill 1195.

My name is Bernard Thomas. I am the Executive Director of the Hartford Knights Youth Organization located at 641 Farmington Avenue, Hartford Connecticut.

The Hartford Knights Organization is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of Connecticut's at-risk youth. Since 2001, the Hartford Knights Organization has provided mentoring, and tutorial programs. Within the past 3 years Hartford Knights Youth Organization has helped over 20 students to pursue their dreams to attend college because the organization understands the importance of higher education assistance. We also have an athletic program that is extended to youth throughout the Greater Hartford area.

The Hartford Knights Organization provides a platform that promotes positive youth development and on-going support that results in advancement to college. Our participants expand their dreams, realize opportunities, and become productive members of our society.

Please support Senate Bill 1195 to ensure that this fiscal crisis does not harm our children any more than it already has, regarding access to a quality education and academic supportive resources.

We must ensure that lawmakers provide the appropriate funding for students with extra learning needs at whatever public schools students attend. Parents have the right to know that their children's education is funded adequately and distributed equitably across the nation for their children.

The Senate Bill 1195:

- Will ensure accurate accounts for town wealth and distributes money more precisely than our current system does. It's time for bold leadership and smarter decision making from our elected officials and our educators.
- Will further ensure the consolidation of disparate funding streams

into a clear and coherent system.

- It will facilitate public school choice by ensuring that each student is treated fairly and consistently, no matter what public schools they attend.
- Would require a common chart of accounts to improve transparency and comparability of district budgets.
- Encourages districts to spend efficiently by linking per-student funding to actual enrollment.
- Grants much-needed flexibility to districts.

I think Senate Bill 1195 is the right direction to go, and I hope you will support it. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,
Bernard Thomas